

## Summer Food Safety

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During the summer our eating habits change. We get out the backyard barbecue and our fruit consumption increases. This article is designed to be cut out, copied, and given to your patients as a public health service.

For safety and taste, meat must be cooked. Cooking kills bacteria and other organisms, and improves flavor and digestion. If you eat beef, chicken, fish, or pork, nothing beats the flavor of the barbecue. However, barbecuing does have some risks. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) can form when barbecuing. PAH is in the smoke from charcoal (even more from mesquite) and sticks to whatever it touches: the grill and the food on the grill. PAHs are formed when juice that contains fat drips off what is cooking and strikes the hot coal. In animal studies PAH causes a wide variety of cancers. To reduce PAH formation, you must prevent juices from striking the coal. The more fatty the food you are barbecuing, the more juice will form and drip off. When barbecuing, trim all visible fat, remove skin, and use a drip pan or foil to catch the runoff.

The following table is the approximate fat content of five ounces of commonly consumed animal products.

Food Item	Grams of Fat	Food Item	Grams of Fat
Lobster	1	Shark	7
Scallops	1	Chicken drumstick with skin	12
Skinless chicken breast	2	Top round steak	13
Sole	2	Chicken breast with skin	13
Snapper	3	All-beef hot dog	13
Halibut	3	Chicken thigh with skin	22
Shrimp	3	Chicken wing with skin	23
Skinless chicken drumstick	5	Extra-lean ground beef	24
Skinless chicken wing	5	Lean ground beef	30
Tuna	5	Sirloin steak	30
Sea bass	5	Pork spareribs	34
Salmon	6	T-bone steak	37
Skinless chicken thigh	6	Regular ground beef	38
Swordfish	6		

A quick guide to choosing the best fruit:

Food Item	Choose	Avoid
Apples	Firm, well colored, crisp. In the summer, fruit from the Southern Hemisphere is fresher.	Avoid Soft spots, bruises, skin that wrinkles when rubbed with your thumb; spotty brown areas may indicate prolonged cold storage.

Apricots	Uniform, golden orange color. Ripe fruit yields with gentle finger pressure.	Mushy, pale yellow, greenish yellow, or dull looking.
Blueberries	Dark blue, blueblack or purple in color; plump, dry, and uniform in size; free from leaves; bloom (grayish silvery deposit on skin, varies with variety and is not unhealthy).	Wrinkled skin; dull color; soft, watery appearance; mold, especially in stem area.
Boysenberries	Deep burgundy color; drupes (tiny cells that are actually individual fruits that make up the berry) should be plump and tender.	Wet, mushy, and moldy fruit.
Blackberries	Bright, glossy, deep purple black color with plump, tender drupes.	Wet, mushy, and moldy fruit.
Cantaloupes	Ripe fruit has a yellowish rind, a pleasant cantaloupe fragrance, and should be slightly soft on the blossom (nonstem) end. The netting or veining should be thick and coarse, and should stand out over some parts of the surface. The skin color between the netting should have changed from green to a light yellow. Small scars or bruises generally will not affect quality.	A deep yellow rind color, softening over the entire rind; mold, especially around the stem area.
Cherries	Bright, glossy, deep maroon or mahogany red to black in color; plump surface, fresh stems.	Dry stems; dull color; soft, leaking flesh; brown discoloration; mold.
Grapes	Well colored; firmly attached to green, pliable stems; firm and wrinkle free. Green grapes are sweetest when they are yellow green in color. Red are best when red color predominates over the entire fruit.	Wrinkled, soft and leaky fruit; fruit with bleached areas around stem attachment.
Grapefruits	Firm, springy to touch; well shaped and heavy for size; thin, smooth skin is the juiciest. Some defects such as scale, scratches, and scars do not affecting eating quality.	Rough, ridged, or wrinkled skin; fruit that is light weight for size; soft discolored areas around stem.
Honeydew melons	Soft, velvety feel; slightly soft with finger pressure at the blossom end; a yellow white or creamy rind color is best.	Dead white or green white color; a hard and smooth feel; bruises and cuts in the rind.
Lemons	Rich, yellow color; fine textured skin; a heavy feel for the size; greenish yellow color lemons are more acid.	Shriveled, hard skin; soft or spongy skin; mold or decay, especially at stem end.
Limes	Green, glossy skin; heavy for size.	Dull, dry skin with soft spots or mold. Deep yellow colored fruit isn't as acid. Brown or purplish mottling is called scald and does not necessarily affect taste.
Nectarines	Will vary with varieties, look for yellow orange between red areas; bright looking fruit, slightly plump and with a soft feeling along the seam.	Soft fruit, hard fruit, dull color; cracks or shrivels in the skin.
Oranges	Firm, well colored; heavy feeling for their size; fine textured skin; surface blemishes such as scratches and scars will not affect taste.	Badly creased, puffy, or spongy skin; skin with a rough texture and skin with soft spots that appear to be water soaked. Fruit that is light in weight has less juice.

Peaches	Firm to slightly soft; skin color between red areas should be yellow or creamy and varies with variety.	Very firm, green fruit which will not ripen properly. Soft mushy fruit is overripe. Bruised and/or pale tan spots indicate decay.
Pears	Bartletts should be pale to rich yellow. Anjou or comice should be light green to yellowish green. Bosc should be greenish yellow to brownish yellow. Ripe fruit is slightly soft around the stem end with some pressure.	Fruit with dull appearing skin; excessively soft skin near the stem; shriveled fruit; fruit with dark spots.
Pineapples	Bright color; firm, plump, and dark green turning to orange and yellow; heavy for size; fragrant smell.	Dull, yellowish green color; dried appearance; soft spots; mold; unpleasant odor.
Plums	Fruit that is fairly firm to slightly soft; color varies from crimson to purple, depending on variety.	Excessively hard or soft fruit; skin breaks; brown discoloration.
Raspberries	Firm, plump, bright red with uniform color; no attached stem caps.	Soft, mushy, leaky; look for and avoid mold around stem cap area.
Strawberries	Bright red in color; plump; free from dirt; well rounded.	Extra large berries may have a bland taste; small, misshapen berries may be bitter. Mushy, leaky fruit; large, uncolored or seedy areas with a dull appearance. Mold can spread rapidly from one berry to another and will most likely be present on berries in the middle to bottom regions of the container.
Tangerines	Bright, deep yellow or orange color; skin is loose so will not feel firm to touch.	Green or light yellow fruit; punctures or deep scratches on the skin; soft brown spots.
Watermelon	Fruit with a smooth, slightly dull surface; ends should be filled out and rounded, and the belly should have a creamy color; flesh should be firm and juicy with a rich, red color without white streaks; seeds should be dark brown or black; seedless variety may have small, immature white seeds.	Palecolored, dry, mealy, watery, or stringy flesh with white streaks and whitish seeds.

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